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ABSTRACT

Institutions of higher education spend considerable resources in the recruiting, screening, and hiring processes, yet often pay little attention to acclimating new professionals to their surroundings. This document presents a step-by-step outline of how to orient new employees. The success of the new professional/institution relationship depends upon each party's understanding of its respective responsibilities and that employee orientation programs are cost-effective and necessary for the successful integration into work and community. The process is presented in two sections. The first section, Orientation Components, discusses the underlying theory of orientation, job-related responsibilities, technical skills, campus culture, departmental culture, and individual wellness. The second section, Stages of Orientation, offers a detailed look at the first day of work, and discusses organizational and departmental orientation. One-page summaries of the two sections follow the title page. Four scenarios followed by open-ended questions are included, followed by a list of nine references and contact information for the presenters. (RJM)

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New Directions for New Professionals

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ACPA 1996 Annual Convention - Baltimore, Maryland
Sunday, March 10, 8:00 am - 9:15 am
Sheraton - Chesapeake III

Presented by:
Elizabeth J. Dowling, Academic Advisor, University of Rhode Island
Michelle A. Eaker, Operations Manager, University of Rhode Island

Agenda:

8:00 - 8:10	Introductions
8:10 - 8:15	Benefits of orientation to institution and individual
8:15 - 8:30	Explanation of orientation components
	Underlying theory
	Job related responsibilities
	Technical skills
	Campus culture
	Departmental culture
	Individual wellness
8:30 - 8:40	Explanation of orientation stages
	First day of work
	Organizational orientation
	Department orientation
8:40 - 8:55	Breakout groups to design orientation programs
8:55 - 9:05	Opportunities and obstacles
9:05 - 9:15	Question and answer period
	Conclusion

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Abstract:
Institutions of higher education spend considerable resources in the recruiting, screening, and hiring processes, yet often pay little attention to acclimating new professionals to their surroundings.

The new professional-institution relationship cannot be taken for granted. The success of this relationship is highly dependent upon each party's understanding of its respective responsibilities. It is our belief that employee orientation programs are cost-effective and necessary for the successful integration into work and community.

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Orientation Components

Underlying Theory
Research into organizational dynamics and structure, adult education methods, learning styles and needs theory provides a foundation for orientation program development.

Job Related Responsibilities
A thorough explanation of all job responsibilities and expectations must be conveyed to the new professional, as well as relevant information regarding organization structure and history.

Technical Skills
Introduction of communication resources and general access to the technology of an institution.

Campus Culture
Introduce the new professional to the student, staff and faculty demographics and discuss the prevalent traditions and attitudes held by the institution.

Departmental Culture
The socialization process; this component is especially important the first weeks of the employment period. The new professional has the opportunity to observe the chain of command and the office grapevine.

Individual Wellness
Includes the explanation of six dimensions of wellness: physical, social, emotional, intellectual, occupational and spiritual. An extension of care that is provided to new employees at the onset can help ease anxiety and create an atmosphere of a welcome community.

Stages of Orientation

All orientation components cannot be incorporated into a one day or one week training session. Ambitious orientation programs can result in information overload for the new professional. Vital components such as organizational and departmental culture are sometimes difficult and take considerable time to explain, yet are very necessary for a new professional to understand.

First Day of Work

Prior to the first day of work, a representative from the respective department should be assigned to make contact with the new professional. This representative should also inform the people with whom the new employee will interface and encourage them to help the individual through the adjustment period. This contact should also meet them upon arrival the employee's first day and devote several minutes to put her or him at ease and to establish rapport. The end of the first day should end as it began: the contact may meet with the new professional to discuss the day and answer any questions she or he may have.

Organizational Orientation

A well planned organizational orientation program is designed to help employees feel welcome and knowledgeable about their new institution. More specifically it will give new professionals an overview of the institution's history, present status and explain the organizational structure.

Departmental Orientation

In addition to the organizational orientation, there are issues a department representative may more effectively present - preferably the same contact that met the employee the first day. Office policies and procedures must be explained in greater detail, along with its current mission and vision statement to give the new professional a better understanding of the work environment.

Orientation Components

Underlying Theory

Research into organizational dynamics and structure, adult education methods, learning styles and needs theory provides a foundation for orientation program development (see attached resources).

Job Related Responsibilities

A thorough explanation of all job responsibilities and expectations must be conveyed to the new professional, as well as relevant information regarding organization structure and history. Other issues to be covered might include but are not limited to:

A review of the employee handbook and university policies
An overview of the department history and institution flow chart
Staff identification card, parking location and permit
Meeting key players
Introduction of support and janitorial staff and location of department resources
Annual projects, yearly time line
Facility acclimation and history
Tour of department and campus - hours of offices and services
Setting up office space
Financial budget
Payment process and schedule, benefits, where to pick up check
Complete personnel files
Union explanation
University policies - EEO and affirmative action policies
Keys - where department keys are kept, where do you go when you lose them

Technical Skills

Introduction of communication resources and general access to the technology of an institution.This might include but is not limited to:

Technology support and training - audio visual, computer, library
Paperwork processing and copying procedures
Policies regarding bookstore supplies and processing
Communication structure
Filing system
Budgets - computer programs
Phone system - phone books, voice mail, on and off campus calling
United States and university mail system - mailing codes
Emergency plans and drills

Campus Culture

Introduce the new professional to the student, staff and faculty demographics and discuss the prevalent traditions and attitudes held by the institution. This might include but is not limited to:

- Education draws
- Ideal and real mission and goal statements of the institution and department
- Institutional and department identity
- Athletics in general - traditions, successes, mascots
- Environmental effects
- Political slants
- Relationship with the community
- Campus publications - what is read and how to use them
- How the flow chart affects institution culture
- Student involvement and perception
- The perception of the department on campus by students, faculty and staff
- Union climate
- Faculty interaction

Departmental Culture

The socialization process; this component is especially important the first weeks of the employment period. The new professional has the opportunity to observe the chain of command and the office grapevine. This may also include but is not limited to:

- Inter-department communication - weekly meetings, notework, email, department lingo, etc.
- Autonomy
- Working styles and dress codes
- Decision making policies - official and unofficial
- Work hours and procedures
- Relationship with students, other staff and administration
- Role modeling and mentor programs
- Involvement with department and outside interests
- Community service opportunities
- Professional affiliations
- Student expectations
- Performance review

Individual Wellness

Includes the explanation of six dimensions of wellness: physical, social, emotional, intellectual, occupational and spiritual. An extension of care that is provided to new employees at the onset can help ease anxiety and create an atmosphere of a welcome community. This might include but is not limited to:

Housing facilities
Cultural opportunities
Personal interests - inquire about their hobbies
Give tour of community - local libraries, museums, parks
Life issues - banking, mail, phone, auto maintenance, daycare, religion, food, medical support, driver's license, mass transit, shopping, restaurants, clubs, utility companies, hair salons, laundromat and drycleaner locations
Cash advance if possible
Fitness facilities
Stress management
Political involvement opportunities
Community service opportunities
Explanation of location quirks
Professional development
Community and regional maps in a welcome packet

Stages of Orientation

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First Day of Work

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- Introductions
- Familiarization with their office and department logistics
  - Telephone
  - Supplies
  - Desk - policies regarding pictures, plants and other personal items
  - Restrooms and water fountain locations
  - Photocopy machines - explain how to use
  - Administrative assistants
- Take the new professional to lunch
- Tour of the campus
  - Dining facilities
  - Childcare facilities (if appropriate)
  - Parking permits and staff identification card
  - Exercise facilities
  - Provide campus map and department building floor plan
  - Evacuation and emergency procedures
- Personnel appointment
  - Complete personal files
  - Compensation schedule and benefits explanation
  - Health care
- Familiarize employee with university policies and procedures
- Review and evaluation

Organizational Orientation

A well planned organizational orientation program is designed to help employees feel welcome and knowledgeable about their new institution. More specifically it will give new professionals an overview of the institution's history and present status and explain the organizational structure. More specifically it will provide a/an:

Overview of the institution's history and present status;
Explanation of the organizational structure;
Description of the organizations' philosophy, goals, and objectives;
Description of the benefits and employee services offered;
Outline the institution's standards of performance;
Statement of rules, regulations, policies, and procedures;
Outline of safety, security, ethical, and morality practices.

An organizational orientation program that includes these components is generic in its development and applies to every faculty and staff member. This may be implemented in a group setting to all university employees, thus saving time and expenses. A popular method of orientation is the flexible mode orientation program, whereby a general session during the first few days of employment is followed by detailed modules of varying duration in subsequent weeks and months. This provides a progression from general to detailed information, which also ensures greater information retention.

Naturally, the exact information provided and the amount needed for orientation is dependent upon the institution and time frame. Follow-up sessions several weeks or months later are encouraged, as well as the participation of key administrators, staff and human resource professionals.

Departmental Orientation

In addition to the organizational orientation, there are issues a department representative may more effectively present - preferably the same contact that met the employee the first day. In order to give the new professional a better understanding of the work environment the content of this orientation might include:

Department norms and responsibilities
Department structure and communication procedures
Disciplinary and grievance procedures
Interrelationship between own department and other departments
Job duties and responsibilities
Personal telephone calls and mail
Reporting relationships
Vacation scheduling and time off

1. Design the first day of an orientation program for admissions counselors at a large pubic institution. You have $100 to spend. This will be the first effort by a department at your institution to orient new professionals. What components would be most important to ensure success at your institution for the orientees? What obstacles might you encounter?

2. Your institution does not have the money or resources to implement an orientation program. What information would be included in a manual that would be given to a new professional? Pay particular attention to departmental culture. What obstacles might you encounter? What are the advantages of using this method?

3. Design the organizational component of an orientation program at a small, private college. Focus on the specific characteristics of your institution. How would this differ from a large institution? What obstacles might you encounter?

4. Often in orientation programs, the Individual Wellness component is overlooked. As the Director of Student Life, how would you ensure that this element of orientation provides the necessary information for the professionals in your office? What campus resources might be utilized for implementation? What obstacles might you encounter?

Resources:

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